

**NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA  
December 9, 2019**

**IM 5367**

**TO:** County Social Service Directors  
Economic Assistance Policy Regional Representatives  
Economic Assistance Policy Quality Control Reviewers

**FROM:** Michele Gee, Director, Economic Assistance

**SUBJECT:** Use of Federal Data Services Hub (FDSH) for Economic Assistance Programs

**PROGRAMS:** Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

**EFFECTIVE:** Immediately

**SECTIONS AFFECTED:** CCAP:  
Documentation/Verification of Earned Income 400-28-65-10-30  
LIHEAP:  
Income -Verification 415-15-10-05  
SNAP:  
Sources of Verification 430-05-20-55-15  
TANF:  
Verification of Selected Eligibility Factors and Verification Sources 400-19-15-10

Information received through the Federal Data Services Hub (FDSH) in order to obtain real-time verification of earnings based on data from Equifax (previously known as TALX or The Work Number) can ONLY be used to determine eligibility for Health Care Coverage programs.

For all other economic assistance programs, this information will be considered known information to the county. The information must be verified independently if action is required and action is taken based on individual program policy.

This information was previously shared in FYI No. 16-014.

**CCAP:**

**Documentation/Verification of Earned Income 400-28-65-10-30**

All earned income received by the family must be verified.

The primary verification of declared earnings is the pay record (pay stubs, etc.) verifying the gross wages received paid by the employer.

Documents or records available to verify earned income include but are not limited to the following:

- Pay stubs
- Employer's wage records
- A statement from the individual's employer that includes the name of the business, the name of the person who completed, signed and dated the form, along with the position they occupy in the business.
- A copy of the contract if income is received on a contractual basis
- Interface

**NOTE:** Information received through the Federal Data Services Hub (FDSH) in order to obtain real-time verification of earnings based on data from Equifax (previously known as TALX or The Work Number) can ONLY be used to determine eligibility for Health Care Coverage programs.

For all other economic assistance programs, this information will be considered known information to the county. The information must be verified independently if action is required.

## **LIHEAP:**

### **Income - Verification 415-15-10-05**

While eligibility for LIHEAP is determined in large measure on information supplied by the applicant under penalty of perjury, income eligibility must be supported by conclusive, documenting evidence.

All sources and types of income that exceed \$500 per year must be verified at the time of application by written documentation. This may be accomplished by the use of wage stubs, signed statement from an employer, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) forms, automatic bank deposit slips for social security, award letters for SSI or other types of benefits, ND✓erify, etc.

**ND✓erify searches are to be conducted according to current agreements with the interface sources.**

**NOTE:** Information received through the Federal Data Services Hub (FDSH) in order to obtain real-time verification of earnings based on data from Equifax (previously known as TALX or The Work Number) can ONLY be used to determine eligibility for Health Care Coverage programs.

For all other economic assistance programs, this information will be considered known information to the county. The information must be verified independently if action is required.

If the application is taken during the early days of the month before the current wage stub is available, the previous month's wage stubs, etc. may be used to establish the amount of monthly income. If the applicant has income from a new source in the month of application, consider the amount of this monthly income. Establish the annual amount of income by using the current wage stubs received and the pay frequency. If no pay checks have been received at the time of application, a written verification from the employer should be provided by the applicant.

Income received during any month used to compute eligibility and/or benefits prior to the month of application must be similarly verified.

Wherever possible, the case file should contain copies of the written

verification provided by the applicant. However, where this is not feasible, such as when an application is taken by home call or in alternate sites where a copy machine is not accessible, it is sufficient for the eligibility technician to make a case note of the type of written verification that was seen.

Where the applicant is a current recipient of another public assistance program, it is sufficient to make a cross reference in the case file to the appropriate public assistance record containing the documentation of income, so long as the other record is current and has been reviewed for completeness of information used to establish LIHEAP eligibility. If the TEC3 screens are used to verify TANF income, the worker needs to be sure the amounts used reflect the net TANF grant actually received without the extra allowances for special needs, child care reimbursements, incentive allowances, etc.

Since LIHEAP eligibility will normally be determined only once during the duration of the heating season, it is not necessary to report or verify income changes.

### **SNAP:**

### **Sources of Verification 430-05-20-55-15**

Acceptable sources of verification include documentary evidence, collateral contacts, home visits and system interfaces.

### **Documentary Evidence**

Documentary evidence is written confirmation of a household's circumstances and must be used as the primary source of verification for all items except residency and household size. If the household cannot obtain documentary evidence, the worker may require collateral contacts or do a scheduled home visit. Residency and household size may be verified through any other source of verification.

### **Examples:**

**Wage stubs, rent receipts and utility bills.**

Acceptable verification is not limited to any single type of document and may be obtained from the household or another source.

Whenever documentary evidence is insufficient to make a determination of eligibility or benefit level, the worker must pend the application and request sufficient verification from the household.

### **Collateral Contacts**

A collateral contact is a verbal confirmation of a household's circumstances by an individual outside the household and are used when documentary evidence is insufficient or incomplete. The collateral contact may be either in person or over the telephone. The worker must rely on the household to provide the name of any collateral contact. The household may request assistance in naming a collateral contact.

A collateral contact can be any third-party verification of the household's statements. The worker is responsible for obtaining verification from acceptable collateral contacts, which include but are not limited to:

- Employers
- Landlords
- Social service agencies
- Community action agencies
- Migrant service agencies

Once the household has supplied the name of a collateral contact or has asked the worker for assistance in locating a collateral contact, the worker must promptly contact the collateral contact or otherwise assist the household in obtaining the necessary verification.

When the collateral contact designated by the household is unacceptable, the worker must ask the household to name another collateral contact or substitute a scheduled home visit.

The county should only disclose the information that is absolutely necessary to get the information being sought. The county should avoid disclosing that a household has applied for SNAP and should not disclose any information provided by the household. Counties should not suggest that a household is suspected of any wrong doing.

In directly contacting a collateral contact, the worker must always identify themselves by name, position and the name of the county social services office. In doing so and then inquiring about a particular client by name, the contact may be able to determine that the client is applying for assistance. This does not constitute a violation of confidentiality.

If the collateral contact requests information about the recipient's status, the worker must refuse the inquiry and briefly explain the confidentiality requirements.

Verification obtained in non-written form must be documented in the case file.

### **Home Visits**

Home visits are used on a case-by-case basis when documentary evidence or collateral contacts are insufficient or cannot be obtained. A home visit must be scheduled in advance with the household.

### **System Interfaces**

Workers have access to the following interfaces that are acceptable types of verification:

- NDVerify
  - Birth/Death Records (ND Vital Records)
  - Health Insurance (DEERS)
  - ND Child Support (FACSES)
  - ND Department of Corrections
  - ND Motor Vehicle/Watercraft (Motor Vehicle/Game & Fish)
  - ND State Directory of New Hire
  - ND State Hospital Admission/Discharge
  - ND Unemployment Insurance Benefits (Job Services)
  - ND Wages (Job Services)
  - Other Benefit Information
  - SNAP Intentional Program Violations
  - WSI Medical Claims Status
  - Request UPA
  - Request 40 Quarters
- Job Service Unemployment Insurance Benefits
- SAVE

- IEVS
- PARIS
- Motor Vehicle
- NUMIDENT -This interface is used to verify an individual's social security number and identity. Administrative Manual Section 448-01-50-15-60 provides additional information regarding the NUMIDENT interface, and defines the alerts that are created when the NUMIDENT match is determined 'Invalid'.

When the return NUMIDENT file is processed, the following indicators display in the NUMIDENT field on Client Profile in TECS with the results of the match:

- Blank – means the information has not been sent to Social Security Administration
- I – Invalid match for social security number
- S – Sent to Social Security Administration for verification
- V – Valid match for social security number

If the indicator is 'I' (invalid) the SSN, name, date of birth or sex of the individual was an invalid match with the SSA information.

When the worker receives one of the following alerts, a valid or active SSN has not been provided.

- SSN Invalid
- SSA has different SSN for client, a valid SSN has not been provided.
- More than 1 SSN at SSA

The worker must send Notice F419 to the household requesting verification of a valid active social security number. If the household does not respond the case continues until review. Verification of the SSN is required at the next review.

When the worker receives one of the following alerts, information entered into TECS may be incorrect or the individuals NUMIDENT record at SSA has incorrect information

- SSN Invalid – sex does not match

- SSN Invalid – DOB does not match
- Sex & DOB do not match SSA
- Name does not match SSN

TECS may be incorrect or the individuals NUMIDENT record at SSA has incorrect information. The worker should check the information entered into TECS for accuracy. If the worker is unable to determine if the information in TECS is accurate, the worker must contact the household (via phone or F419) to determine the correct date of birth or sex and then correct the information in TECS. If the worker contacts the household by phone, the contact must be thoroughly documented in the narrative. If the worker is not able to clarify the information, it needs to be clarified as part of the next review.

- National Directory of New Hire (NDNH)

Federal regulations require SNAP to match against the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), National Directory of New Hire (NDNH).

Each month a file of adults included on applications and reviews approved in the prior month will be sent to the NDNH. Individuals with employment record(s) in the prior month will be returned and used to generate a hit in TECS. Eligibility workers will receive an alert on the fourth working day of the month informing them of the hit. These hits serve as a lead for SNAP to determine if income was reported and correctly considered in determining eligibility. The hits cannot be acted on for other programs. If the verification is obtained for SNAP, the verification can be used to determine if income was reported and correctly considered for other programs.

If the employment was reported by the household and/or in the case file, the eligibility worker must ensure that the verification was used correctly in determining eligibility. If the verification is not in the case file, the following steps must be used to verify the hit.

1. The worker must use the information provided in the hit (employer name and address) to obtain verification from the employer. If the verification is received, any necessary corrective action must be taken allowing for advance notice.
2. If the employer fails to provide the verification within 30 days, the worker must send the F814 – Claims/Required Verification



allowing the household 10 days to provide the verification. If the verification is received, any necessary corrective action must be taken allowing for advance notice.

If the case is closed and the household fails or refuses to respond to the request, the worker must document in the case file that there is an outstanding claim issue. If the household applies at a later date, the household must cooperate by providing the information necessary to calculate the claim. If the household continues to fail or refuse to provide the information, the application must be denied.

If the case is an ongoing SNAP case and the household fails or refuses to respond to the request, the worker must send the F401- Failure to Provide Information. The case will close at the end of the advance notice period. The worker must document in the case file that there is an outstanding claim issue. If the household reapplies at a later date, the household must cooperate by providing the information necessary to calculate the claim. If the household continues to fail or refuse to provide the information the application must be denied.

If the household responds and indicates they need assistance in obtaining the information, the worker must attempt to obtain the information from the appropriate source. If the appropriate source fails to respond and provide the needed verification, the worker must complete the claim based on the best information provided by the household. The worker must document the attempt to verify income, income used and how it was arrived at.

NDNH hits must be processed and entered on the NDNH Tracking Results Screen (NDTR) within 45 days of the received date on the National Directory of New Hire (NADO) screen in TECS. The appropriate fields on the NDTR screen relating to the action taken must be completed as this information is required by Federal Regulations. These fields include:

- Interface/Case File Information OK – the household reported the information correctly at the time of application or review.

- Individual Verified as Employed – The household failed to report this employment at the time of application or review.
- SNAP Case Closed Due to Earnings – The earnings from the NDNH hit resulted in case closure.
- SNAP Benefits Reduced Due to Earnings – The earnings from the NDNH hit resulted in a reduction in benefits.
- Difference in Benefit Amount Due to Earnings – The difference in the benefit amount the household would have received prior to the verified employment and the benefit amount the household actually received after the verified employment. Only the difference for the first month the verified earnings are used is included in this figure (first month of overpayment).

Federal regulations strictly limit the use and disclosure of information received through NDNH to purposes directly related to the administration of SNAP. NDNH information must be safeguarded and MAY NOT be released to any agency or individual, including the applicant or recipient. **DO NOT print or include NDNH information in case files. Information that specifically addresses where the hit came from (OCSE NDNH) or the source of the information (employers) CANNOT be included in the:**

- **Request for verification from the employer**
- **Notification of findings sent to the recipient**
- **Documentation in Narratives**

**Request for verification, notification of findings and narrative documentation may include reference to information received through a computer match.**

Federal law requires that each employee be aware of the unauthorized access and disclosure of information received through a computer match from the NDNH.

The Department maintains a fully automated audit trail of information obtained through the NDNH. The audit trail will track when the alerts and hits are generated along with the completed tracking results.

The state and county social service offices must immediately report

breaches of access and disclosure requirements applicable to NDNH information to:

- Director of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and
- The Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS) Information System Security Officer via email: linda.boyer@acf.hhs.gov.

**NOTE:** Disclosure means information given to another agency or individual who does not require the information to determine eligibility for SNAP.

The record must include:

- Date and time of incident
- Date and time incident was discovered
- How the incident was discovered
- Description of the incident and the data involved (include specific data elements if known but do not include client specific information.
- The address where the incident occurred
- Information technology involved (laptop, server, mainframe)

Any person who knowingly and willfully violates access and disclosure requirements is subject to an administrative penalty (up to and including dismissal from employment), and a fine of \$1,000 must be imposed for each act of unauthorized access to, disclosure of, or use of information in the NDNH.

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For all other economic assistance programs, this information will be considered known information to the county. The information must be verified independently if action is required.

## **Narrative/Documentation**

Casefiles must be documented to support eligibility, ineligibility, and benefit level determinations. Documentation must be detailed to permit a reviewer to determine the reasonableness and accuracy of the determination.

Where verification was required to resolve questionable information, the worker must document why the information was considered questionable or at a minimum, indicate where the inconsistency exists, and what documentation was used to resolve the questionable information.

The worker must document the reason why a collateral contact or home visit was needed.

The worker must also document the reason a collateral contact was unacceptable and an alternate requested.

Good documentation habits save time. Documentation need not be lengthy and no specific format is required but it must address the following:

- Who did the information come from?
- What was the information received?
- When was it received?
- Why is the information pertinent?
- How was the information treated?

## **TANF:**

### **Verification of Selected Factors of Eligibility and Verification Sources 400-19-15-10.**

While eligibility for TANF is determined primarily by information supplied by the applicant/recipient, verification of all factors of eligibility must be supported by conclusive, documenting evidence. It is the responsibility of the applicant or guardian of the applicant to provide documentary evidence to support its statements and resolve any questionable information. The applicant or guardian may supply documentary evidence in person, through the mail, e-mail or fax. If the information is e-mailed, retain a copy of the e-mail that includes the individual's name, the date of the e-mail, and the content of the e-mail. The TANF Eligibility Worker shall accept any reasonable documentary evidence provided by the household and shall offer assistance to the household in obtaining the documentary evidence if needed.

#### **Verification Factors**

Verification is the use of third party information or documentation to establish the accuracy of statements and information provided to the TANF Eligibility Worker. TANF requires the following factors of eligibility to be verified:

1. Proper degree of relationship;
2. Social Security Number or Verification of Application for a Social Security Number;
3. Age;
4. Identity;
5. Citizenship;
6. School attendance of any child age 16 to 18, or if age 18, is a full-time student in a secondary school or a vocational or technical school that is equivalent to a secondary school, and who will, before the end of the calendar month in which the student will attain age 19:

- a. Complete their training curriculum from a secondary school in order to receive a high school diploma or GED, or
  - b. Complete their training at a vocational or technical school that is equivalent to secondary school.
7. All income;
8. Equity value of assets whenever available information or the prudent person concept suggests such reported value may exceed program limitations;
9. Conditions requiring professional examinations or judgments to establish the existence of incapacity or pregnancy;  
  
**Note:** In addition to verification of pregnancy when the case consists of a pregnant woman with no other child(ren), verification of the Estimated Date of Confinement (due date) is also required.
10. Special Items of Need requests;
11. Child or alimony/spousal support, or money paid to non-household members; and
12. Any other factor of eligibility for which available information is lacking, questionable, or inconclusive, and which suggests to a prudent person that further inquiry and/or documentation is necessary.

### **Verification Sources**

1. Documentary Evidence. TANF Eligibility Workers shall use documentary evidence as the primary source of verification. Documentary evidence consists of a written confirmation of a household's circumstances. Examples of documentary evidence include wage stubs, rent receipts, and utility bills. Although documentary evidence shall be the primary source of verification, acceptable verification shall not be limited to a single document or source. Where information from another source contradicts statements made by the household, the household shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to resolve the discrepancy. Whenever documentary evidence cannot be obtained, the TANF Eligibility Worker may use alternate sources of verification such

as collateral contact and home visits. In all cases, the method of verification shall be recorded in the case file.

2. Collateral Contacts. A collateral contact is a verbal confirmation of a household's circumstances by an individual outside the household and is used when documentary evidence is insufficient or incomplete. The collateral contact may be either in person or over the telephone. The TANF Eligibility Worker must rely on the household to provide the name of any collateral contact.

A collateral contact can be any third-party verification of the household's statements. The TANF Eligibility Worker is responsible for obtaining verification from acceptable collateral contacts. Suggested collateral contract sources include the individuals current or prior landlord, school district, banks, community action agencies, Department of Motor Vehicle, non-relatives, current or prior employers, Job Service, housing agencies, social service agencies, etc.

The TANF Eligibility Worker must only disclose the information that is absolutely necessary to get the information being sought. The TANF Eligibility Worker should avoid disclosing that a household has applied for assistance and should not disclose any information provided by the household. TANF Eligibility Workers should not suggest that a household is suspected of any wrongdoing.

The household may designate a collateral contact. However, the TANF Eligibility Worker is not required to use a collateral contact designated by the household if the collateral contact cannot be expected to provide accurate third party verification. Once an acceptable collateral contact is designated, the TANF Eligibility Worker is responsible for obtaining verification from the collateral contact.

In directly contacting a collateral contact source of verification, the TANF Eligibility Worker must always identify him/herself by name, position, and the name of the county social service office. In so doing and then inquiring about a particular client by name, the contact may be able to know that the client is applying for

assistance. This does not constitute a violation of confidentiality regulations.

**Note:** If the contact requests more than this information about the recipient's status, the TANF Eligibility Worker must refuse the inquiry and briefly explain the confidentiality requirements.

Verification obtained in non-written form must be documented in the case file.

3. **Home Visits.** Home visits are to be used as verification only when documentary evidence is insufficient to make a firm determination of eligibility, there are no collateral contacts, or verification cannot be obtained, and the home visit is scheduled in advance with the household.
4. **System Interfaces.** System interface are used to verify information needed to determine eligibility.

The following interfaces can be used as acceptable types of verification:

- a. SDX – This interface can be used to verify SSI eligibility and payment data collected by the Social Security Administration. Refer to Administrative Manual Section 448-01-50-15-40 for further information.
- b. TPQY – This interface can be used to verify Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits. Refer to Administrative Manual Section 448-01-50-15-55 for further information.
- c. FACSES – This interface can be used to verify the amount of child support an individual receives or pays out. Refer to Administrative Manual Section 448-01-50-35 for further information.
- d. New Hire (through FACSES) – This interface is used to verify information regarding individuals hired for employment in North Dakota. Refer to Administrative Manual Section 448-01-50-35 for further information.



- e. IEVS – This interface is used to verify income and asset data from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Social Security Administration (SSA) and Job Service North Dakota for the purpose of making more accurate eligibility determinations. Refer to Administrative Manual Section 448-01-50-10 for further information.
- f. Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB) – This interface can be used to verify the amount of UIB benefits received. Refer to Administrative Manual Section 448-01-50-25 for further information.
- g. Motor Vehicle – This interface can be used to verify vehicle ownership of a household member. Refer to Administrative Manual Section 448-01-50-30 for further information.
- h. Vital Statistics – This interface can be used to verify an individual's date of birth, citizenship and relationship. Refer to Administrative Manual Section 448-01-50-20 for further information.
- i. Numident – This interface is used to verify an individual's social security number, age, identity and sex. Administrative Manual Section 448-01-50-15-60 provides additional information regarding the numident interface, and defines the alerts that are created when the numident match is determined 'Invalid'.

When the return NUMIDENT file is processed, the following indicators display in the NUMIDENT field on Client Profile in Vision with the results of the match:

- i. Blank – This means the information has not been sent to SSA. The TANF Eligibility Worker will need to obtain some other form of verification.
- ii. Sent – This means the information was sent to SSA for verification but the verification has not yet been received back. The TANF Eligibility Worker will need to obtain some other form of verification.
- iii. Valid – This means the SSN entered in Vision matches the SSN on file at SSA and serves as verification of the SSN.

iv. Invalid – This means the SSN, name, date of birth or sex of the individual was an Invalid match with the SSA information.

a. Invalid SSN

- If a copy of the applicant or recipients social security card was obtained and the number on the card matches what was entered into Vision, the card can be used as verification. However, the applicant or recipient should be referred to the local SSA office to resolve the discrepancy.

**Note:** Document in the case file the information on file is correct for the individual and the individual has been sent to Social Security Administration to correct their records.

- If the verification provided is other than the social security card, send an advance notice requesting hard copy verification from the individual. If the requested information is not provided, the application must be denied or the case closed for failure to provide the requested information.

b. Invalid Name – This most often occurs if individuals marry or were adopted.

- If the verification provided is other than from an acceptable source (400-19-45-55-05), send an advance notice requesting hard copy verification from the individual. If the requested information is not provided, the application must be denied or the case closed for failure to provide the requested information.
- If the name in the system matches the verification provided by the recipient, request

the individual contact Social Security Administration to resolve any discrepancy.

**Note:** Document in the case file the information on file is correct for the individual and the individual has been sent Social Security Administration with the correct name.

c. Invalid Date of Birth

- If the individual did not provide verification of birth or the verification is not from an acceptable source (400-19-45-50-05), send an advance notice requesting hard copy verification from the individual. If the verification is not provided, close the case for failure to provide information.
- If the date of birth in the system matches the verification provided by the recipient, request the individual contact Social Security Administration for correction.

**Note:** Document in the case file the information on file is correct for the individual and the individual has been sent to Social Security Administration to resolve any discrepancy

d. Invalid Sex

- If the sex of the individual is in question, the TANF Eligibility Worker must contact the household, and then correct the information. Do not close the case for not providing information on the correct sex. If the household does not respond to the request from the worker, and the sex of the individual is not available, use prudent judgment and clarify during the next face-to-face review.

- If the correct sex is already known, change it in the system.
- If the sex in the system matches the information/ verification provided by the recipient, request the individual contact Social Security Administration for correction.

**Note:** Document in the case file the information on file is correct for the individual and the individual has been sent to Social Security Administration to resolve any discrepancy.

- j. Federal Data Services Hub (FDSH) real-time verification of earnings based on data from Equifax (previously known as TALX or The Work Number) can ONLY be used to determine eligibility for Health Care Coverage programs.

This information will be considered known information to the county. The information must be verified independently if action is required.